

# NOXIOUS WEED ALERT

## SULFUR CINQUEFOIL

(*Potentilla recta*)

- Sulfur cinquefoil grows one to three feet in height.
- Each plant can have one or more stems, which are stout, leafy and hairy with no branches below the flowers.
- The leaves are also hairy.
- Each leaf has five to seven leaflets which are two to four inches long and half an inch to an inch wide.



- The flowers have five light sulfur-yellow petals surrounding a dark yellow center.
- Each flower is half an inch to one

inch in diameter.

- They bloom from late May throughout the summer.

### Look-a-likes:

Sulfur cinquefoil may be confused with buttercups (*Ranunculus spp.*) or with several of our native cinquefoils (*Potentilla spp.*). However, the flowers of buttercups and all of the native cinquefoils are bright yellow, not the distinctive sulfur-yellow of sulfur cinquefoil.

### Distribution:

We are aware of only three sites in Clallam County that have sulfur cinquefoil, but two of the three (on Atterbury Road and on Highway 101 near Siebert's Creek) cover several acres.



### WHY BE CONCERNED?

- Sulfur cinquefoil is extremely invasive, particularly in meadows, where it can outcompete grasses and reduce forage productivity.
- It is unpalatable to livestock.

**Sulfur cinquefoil is a Class B designate weed.  
Control is required in Clallam County.**

## Ecology:

- Sulfur cinquefoil can thrive in many different conditions; logged areas, waste areas, roadsides and abandoned fields are typical habitats. It cannot survive in dense shade.
- A perennial, it sends up new shoots each year from the edge of the root mass. The center slowly dies, so older plants have a circle of living stems around a core of dead material.
- A single taproot is surrounded by shallow, spreading branch roots. The taproot extracts water from deep in the soil and the shallow roots take advantage of light summer rain.
- It reproduces mainly by seed, but root fragments can grow, and stems that are knocked to the ground can produce roots and grow.

## CONTROL

**Because sulfur cinquefoil is very hard to control once established, prevention and early detection and removal are strongly advised.**

- **Practice** good pasture management; avoid overgrazing, irrigate and fertilize as needed, and reseed bare ground. A healthy pasture will resist weed invasion.
- **Use** weed free hay and seed; avoid introducing weed contaminated soil.
- **Clean** equipment which has been used in areas known to have sulfur cinquefoil.
- **Remove** seedlings when young; newly established plants can usually be pulled without leaving root fragments in the ground.
- **Replant** newly weeded areas with desirable (preferably native) plant species that will discourage reinfestation.
- **Dispose** of weeds properly, bag or burn seed heads or fragments that may resprout.
- **Monitor** site for several years; promptly remove new seedlings.

**HANDPULLING** can be effective if care is taken to remove the root crown.

**MOWING** is not an effective control measure, because the extensive root system stores food reserves and sends up new shoots after mowing.

No **BIOLOGICAL CONTROLS** are recommended. Because sulfur cinquefoil is closely related to strawberries, a crop with considerable commercial value, there are concerns that an insect that attacked sulfur cinquefoil may also attack strawberries.

**HERBICIDES** can be effective, but should always be applied with care. Do not apply herbicides over or near water bodies. Read the label to check that you are applying an herbicide in the right place, to the right plant, at the right time, and in the right amount. For perennial weeds, long term control requires stopping seed production **and** attacking the weed's root system. Translocated herbicides, (ones that move throughout a plant's system) are recommended.

Sulfur cinquefoil is particularly **difficult to control** even with herbicides, and because it grows in pastures, selective herbicides such as Crossbow™ (2,4-D and triclopyr) are recommended to avoid injury to grasses. It can re-establish three to four years after treatment, so monitoring is essential and retreatment may be necessary.

**Call if you see this plant.**

Prepared by the **Clallam County Noxious Weed Control Board**; revised 11/2000

For more information call: **(360)-417-2442**  
or see [clallam.net/weed](http://clallam.net/weed)